



Trail Talk

May & June

2015

As the temperatures have increased in May and June so has the volunteerism on the Conasauga Ranger District. May saw Team Conasauga hosting its 75th Working Weekend and a great work day at Dry Creek trail system. May also brought us great weather, which made for a very busy month capped by a very busy Memorial Day. I hope everyone took advantage of this to steward and visit our public lands. If you thought May was busy, June was even busier. The district held three National Trails Day® events which were very successful and we also began hosting the Southeast Conservation Corps, a trail crew out of Chattanooga, TN. They are doing great work across the district and I can't wait for you to read all about them.

I would also like to take a moment and thank our two Volunteer Wilderness Rangers. The first most of you know or have met: **Mark Voykovic**. Mark has been helping patrol the Cohutta Wilderness for many years, educating folk about Leave No Trace and the Beech Bottom / Jacks River Falls Closure Area. The other has just joined us and many of you have not met **Mike Lesiak**. Mike started volunteering with us in April and has been doing a great job patrolling Beech Bottom and Bray Field. Their dedication has been a big help to me and the Wilderness. As we start the new Wilderness Performance Measures I will need their help as well as others to monitor the Wilderness Character of the Cohutta Wilderness. If this interests you, please contact me at kvasalinda@fs.fed.us.



> > > > May < < < <

Team Conasauga's 75th Working Weekend

On the weekend of May 1st & 2nd, Team Conasauga tackled the water bars on Hickory Ridge Trail for their 75th Working Weekend.

Larry Thomas and **Wanda Brown** kicked things off on Friday by hitting the trail early and working many waterbars. They started by hiking in to the base of Buckeye Mountain and cleaning as many as they could down towards the bedspring path. Saturday, just like Friday, was a beautiful day. It was warm and breezy on top of Hickory Ridge. That morning I met **Wanda and Troy Brown, Amos Burrell, Larry Thomas, Travis and Justin Sanchez, and John Franetic** at the Rice Camp Trailhead. We hiked in, cutting a few trees along the way which Larry and Wanda found the day before. At the bed springs we turned up the mountain to make our way to Hickory Ridge Trail. Troy and Wanda turned up the mountain to finish several water bars up towards Buckeye Mountain, while the rest of the group worked downhill towards the Jacks River. The cool breeze and good conversation made the work go by fast. Before we knew it we had reached the Jacks River just in time for a late lunch. Looking at my watch, I felt like I had enough time to cross the river and do a quick patrol of the Beech



Bottom Closure area. It turned out to be a fruitful endeavor because I was able to educate 7 visitors about the Jacks River / Beech Bottom Closure Area, and that they were in violation of it. After meeting with those folks, I high tailed it back across the Jacks River and up Hickory Ridge to meet back up with the group. We hiked out together, delighted that all the work had been done. Back at the trailhead we had a great time of fellowship and snacking together. Thank you all for your hard work and dedication.

Thank You, Dry Creek Volunteers, for Another Productive Day

By Larry Wheat, CONF Trail Crew Leader

On a gorgeous Saturday (5/9/2015) seven volunteers donated their time and resources to maintain the trails and trailhead at the popular Dry Creek Trail System. Most of the work this day was focused on mowing and trimming grass at the large trailhead. We had three mowers and two trimmers operating to get the vegetation in great shape. The entire trailhead was mown, including the vandalized large 'grassy' area on the east side of the trailhead. We also installed two trail signs to clarify the trail location in a couple of spots where recent timber operations created some confusion. Additionally we hauled crushed rock and spread it on two small wet areas on the Pinhoti Trail that passes through the Dry Creek trail area.



The volunteers and their primary trail use follow: ***Hikers were Deb and Larry Park, our bicyclist was Bill Hester, and equestrians were Kathy Hansen, Louis Bondurant, John West and Larry Wheat. A sincere THANK YOU to each one of these volunteers.*** Deb and Larry Park live nearby and are new volunteers. They did a good job on their first trail volunteer outing and we all appreciated meeting them.



Kathy provided two riding mowers, Louis provided a zero radius mower and trimmer, Larry Park provided a trimmer, and Bill Hester provided an ATV with trailer to haul rock. The U.S. Forest Service provided the crushed rock, free parking, and permission to use the ATV and trailer. The trailhead grass now looks great. The next mowing is scheduled for early June. Trail system maintenance is provided primarily by volunteers from the Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG) and the Northwest Georgia Chapter of the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (NWGA SORBA), supported by the Conasauga Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service.



> > > > **June** < < < <

National Trails Day® with Team Conasauga

The Conasauga Ranger District had a wonderful National Trails Day® (NTD). The District hosted



three different events. Team Conasauga worked on the Tearbitches Trail; the trail is not as scary as it sounds but it sure does have a lot of waterbars along its 3.5 miles. **Wanda Brown, Gail Milner** and two new folks, **Dara Denning and Daina Plitkins-Denning** answered the call. Even though their group was small they completed an astounding amount of waterbars and a little sling blading too.

Thank you so much and we hope to see the Dennings again real soon.

National Trails Day® 2015 at Dry Creek-Thank You

Larry Wheat, CONF Trail Crew Leader

The Dry Creek Trail System received routine but necessary maintenance as our contribution to



National Trails Day® (NTD). NTD is the first Saturday of June each year, and was established to remind all of us that trails of all descriptions offer a convenient way to get out and enjoy nature. NTD is celebrated in various ways. Some celebrations are pleasure oriented and others are dedicated to trail advocacy and improvement. Dry Creek experienced both types of celebration on June 6th. The Gordon County Saddle Club held a charity ride at Dry Creek as their celebration. The Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG)

and the Northwest Georgia Chapter of the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (NWGA SORBA) provided the trail maintenance. Maintenance also was provided on multiple days as noted below.

Volunteers who worked on NTD were **Joe Schoech, Bill Semsrott, Bill Hester, Kathy Hansen, Debbie Parks, Larry Parks, Ilona Hester, and Larry Wheat**. They mowed and clipped brush and weeds growing along selected trails. One day earlier **Kathy and Eddie Henson** and **Amy and Gene Findley** mowed a major portion of the trailhead grass as preparation for the charity ride. Some of our SORBA regular volunteers had a conflict on NTD so they came out a few days earlier to mow and trim brush along selected trails.



They were **Marcus Moore, Gennie Dasinger, Denise Cross, Conrad Fernandez and Steve Harrell**. Kathy Hansen provided and operated her field and brush mower during the workday. Patricia and Pic Petelle were not present due to other activities, but they provided their field and brush mower for us to use. Others provided trimmers of various types (weed, brush, and hedge). The use of machine tools allows us to maintain this large trail system (29 miles).



We had the support of a team from the Southeast Conservation Corps of Chattanooga (SECC). This team was helping the US Forest Service on other projects and assisted us on NTD. The team consisted of two crew leaders and six other team members. The team was **Thomas Dudzik-Gaki, Celeste Von Ahnen, Drew Mallinak, Alex Guidi, Caroline Forbes, Will Cotten, Blake Hodson, and Alexandra Gold**. These young adults cleaned out water dips/turnouts and debarred them, and cut brush encroaching on assigned trails.



Ed Lang of the USFS District Office came by at midday to offer the USFS appreciation for the volunteer effort contributed towards keeping the Dry Creek trails and trailhead in great



condition. Volunteers always appreciate direct support and presence of the land manager-USFS in this case.

The Gordon County Saddle Club graciously invited all the volunteers to partake of the sandwiches and lunch items provided for the charity ride participants and volunteers. Thank you club members.

Our next regular trail improvement day is currently scheduled for Saturday, July 11 (one week later than normal due to holiday). We will again start at 8:00 a.m. to enable us to stop by noon, because of heat conditions.



National Trails Day®

A success story by the

Back Country Horsemen of North Georgia

June 6th, 2015. 0900. Jacks River Fields Campground

Fifteen dedicated BCHNG members gather around Melinda Wagner for the morning tailgate safety meeting, tool dispersal, and job assignments. Today will be dedicated to campground maintenance and the Pinhoti Trail section from the intersection of the South Fork Trail to Old SR2. Four teams are formed, one for the campground, three for Pinhoti: one starting on the upper end, one on the lower end, and a ground crew for brush removal. Today's work, to the extent possible, will be accomplished on horseback. BCHNG will clear Pinhoti trail section on both sides, overhead, and on the ground to insure proper TMO's (Trail Maintenance Objectives) are maintained.

With crew assignments complete, Crew Leaders take charge and the day begins. Wonderful weather blessed the efforts with a nice breeze and warm sunshine. **Nanci Tarrant, Pam Mathis, and Bob Wagner** make up the campground crew for mowing, weed eating, and bathroom cleaning and resupply. **Hanley Rose** and **Kathleen Corcoran** will start on the upper end from Old SR2, while **Joe and Sharon Burk, Stacy VanZandt, Chuck Panter, Robby Mathis, Brandon and Kelly Arp** rode South Fork to the intersection of Pinhoti and began clearing towards the top crew. **Melinda Wagner** and **Lakota Towe** were the brush clearing crew and had the chore of clearing the brush off the trail behind the mounted crews. Robby Mathis's crew was joined by **Martha Fillingham** and **Lynn Peterson** who rode in on South Fork to the Pinhoti intersection by way of Watson Gap.

The campground group was putting the finishing touches on cleanup when they were joined by Alan Orth of USFS Conasauga District recreation Department. Alan was nice to drop off some cooling neck bandanas for all the workers and took the time to discuss with Bob about working on getting the BCHNG on site Kiosk up to date with some historical information about the Jacks River Fields area and Leave No Trace information.



The crews all completed the day's assigned tasks, with only a few touch ups needed, which were taken care of by Joe and Sharon Burk and Gabriella Prince the following day. With the campground maintenance completed and crews returning, Bob Wagner lit the grill and an afternoon lunch of chili dogs, polish sausage, and chips were enjoyed by all.

Submitted by: Cowboy Bob Wagner

Welcome Southeast Conservation Corps To the Conasauga Ranger District



I am very pleased to welcome the Southeast Conservation Corps to the district. We have the pleasure of hosting this trail crew for June and July working on various trail projects across the district. This eight person crew based out of Chattanooga, TN is comprised of two leaders, **Thomas Dudzik-Gaki, Celeste Von Ahnen**; and six crew members: **Drew Mallinak, Alex Guidi, Caroline Forbes, Will Cotten, Blake Hodson, and Alexandra Gold**.

The first trail project they worked on was the Keown Falls trail. The trail starts out lined with rocks that were placed there by the CCC. However, with no erosion control structures originally installed the trail has been washing away. They were tasked with installing 20 new stone check dams and backfilling them with gravel. Right off the bat we were impressed with the quality and quantity of work they were able to complete. The stone check dams were done with such skill that in a few years as they naturalize you will not be able to tell the difference from the original CCC work and the SECC work. It will all look as if it was built to last and has been there for many decades. They accomplished all this work with enough time left in their 8 day work week that they also finished some tread reconstruction on the loop trail between the two waterfalls. Also during this week, they helped Larry Wheat at Dry Creek for NTD and helped our employees install a fence around the Manning Mill Pinhoti Trailhead parking lot in a joint Wildlife and Recreation project. Wow, what a great start to their two months on our Ranger District!



The second project they worked on was obliterating all the illegal campsites inside the Beech Bottom / Jacks River Falls Closure area. This project has been very high on my priority list to help increase compliance and reclaim the most visited area of the Cohutta Wilderness. They completely destroyed all 12 illegal campsites making it impossible to use any of them for the foreseeable future. They also had the time to block off the illegal

shortcuts that lead directly to the falls and cause untold resource damage. It looks better down there along the Jacks River than I could have imagined, and my first Saturday patrol of the area since the work was completed saw 100% compliance and I don't think it is a coincidence. Thank you so much for all this hard work. I can't wait to see what gets done on their next project: tackling the boulder field below Panther Creek Falls.



Before



After

Dates for the 2015 Workdays:

July 10-11, 2015 – Rough Ridge Trail
(sling blade)
(Working Weekend # 76)

July 11, 2015 - Dry Creek Work Day,
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com

August 1, 2015 - Dry Creek Work Day,
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com

August 8, 2015 – Lower Jacks River Trail
(campsite maintenance)

September 5, 2015 - Dry Creek Work Day,
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com

September 12, 2015 – Lower Jacks River Trail
(sling blade)

October 3, 2015 - Dry Creek Work Day,
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com

October 3, 2015 – Team Conasauga (TBA)

October 24, 2015 – USFS Volunteer
Appreciation Picnic

November 6-7, 2015 – Team Conasauga (TBA)
(Working Weekend # 77)





For more information on activities and events happening on the Conasauga Ranger District, please check out the following links to the various associations who are committed to helping us provide a safe, enjoyable trail experience for our forest users...

Team Conasauga: www.teamconasauga.org or www.facebook.com/teamconasauga

Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA): www.bmta.org

Backcountry Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG): www.bchnwg.org

Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG): www.bchng.org

Northwest Georgia Southern Off-Road Bike Association (NWGA SORBA): www.nwgasorba.org

Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association: www.pinhoti.info

Appalachian Trail Association (GATC): www.georgia-atclub.org

Ellijay Mountain Biking Association (EMBA): www.ellijaymountainbike.org

Southern Off-Road Bike Association (SORBA): www.sorba.org or www.ngwasorba.org

Co-Trails: www.cotrails.org

Any interested people, please contact me at kvasalinda@fs.fed.us. Thanks and see you on the trail.

~Kevin~

